

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

Media Office

Democratic Caucus

John Schorg, Director

Statehouse, Room 157

Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

1-800-382-9842 or 1-317-232-9621

Fax Number: 1-317-232-9792

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REP. DENNIE OXLEY'S STATEHOUSE REPORT

INDIANAPOLIS – With six weeks to go in the 2005 session of the Indiana General Assembly, attention in the Indiana House has turned to legislation sent to us from the state Senate.

To the outside observer, the legislative process in the next several weeks will look similar to our work at the start of this year. In the weeks to come, House committees will begin to conduct hearings on the 229 Senate bills and three joint resolutions. Once approved there, the measures will move to the full House for consideration.

In two ways, however, the process will differ for lawmakers. As representatives consider Senate bills, they also will be keeping watch on the 117 House bills and one joint resolution that were sent to the other chamber.

That means two sets of committee hearings to attend, and two sets of bills that can serve as homes for language and concepts that legislators want to keep alive. Leaders already have said they want to revive 40 measures that did not survive last week's deadlines in the House. I would like to see many of those concepts return to life, as long as they will be the subject of honest debate and compromise.

Among our top priorities will be keeping an eye on how the Senate handles House Bill 1001, which contains the biennial state budget. It is my hope that senators will make positive changes to a House Republican budget plan that currently calls for cuts in funding for education and health care and increases local property taxes.

Our deadline for completing work on Senate bills is April 11. This week, I would like to devote my Report to some of the measures that will be on our agenda.

In many cases, the Senate has passed bills that mirror proposals that have been debated in the Indiana House. For instance, Senate Bill 444 would help the state's efforts to halt the spread of methamphetamine by limiting the distribution of items called precursors that are used to produce the drug. The bill restricts the sale of drugs containing the chemicals ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

SB 483 would require a person to produce a photo ID in order to vote. My concerns about this proposal have not changed. It will intimidate voters from going to the polls and it will create the kind of havoc seen in Ohio last November, when people had to wait hours to vote. Eliminating fraud is a good idea, but we need to look at problem areas like inefficient voting machines, faulty computer software and wrongful filing of absentee ballots. We need to encourage people to participate in the electoral process, not think of ways to keep them away from the polls.

Education proposals include SB 231, which changes the enrollment date for a child to attend kindergarten from July 1 to August 1. SB 285 requires a school corporation to adopt rules to prohibit bullying. SB 281 establishes a transfer program that would enable parents to move their children to another public school in the school corporation or another school corporation entirely. SB 332 requires school corporations to display the American flag in every classroom and give students a daily opportunity to voluntarily recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Other bills cover issues that have been perennials of past sessions. For example, SB 7 would require all occupants of a motor vehicle to wear a safety belt, with some exceptions. SB 217 calls for increasing the speed limit on interstates in rural Indiana from 65 to 70 miles per hour.

In addition, SB 570 would allow cities and towns to install devices that produce still photographs of vehicles that run red lights at intersections throughout those communities. SB 503 prohibits a state agency from releasing an individual's Social Security number unless the release is required by state or federal law or authorized by that person. SB 327 would delay the start of the next general reassessment of real property by two years, from 2007 to 2009. SB 363 provides a system where full-time judges and justices automatically receive a salary increase.

SB 76 requires a health care provider to provide a pregnant woman with information about the availability of ultrasound imaging of a fetus before performing an abortion. SB 268 prohibits the state from participating in human cloning activities. SB 568 requires birthing centers to be licensed by the state department of health.

PROTECTING HOOSIERS – SB 164 requires a repeat offender of the charge of possession of child pornography to register as a sex offender, while SB 230 adds community associations to the list of groups that receive the sex and violent offender directory. SB 159 allows a court to order counseling for any person found guilty of committing animal cruelty. SB 172 makes it illegal to practice dental hygiene without a license.

JOINT RESOLUTIONS – Senate Joint Resolution 1 gives the Indiana Senate the power to determine whether an Indiana Supreme Court justice or a Indiana Court of Appeals judge will be retained. SJR 7 provides that the definition of marriage in Indiana consists of a union between one man and one woman. Remember that Indiana law already bans same-sex marriages, a ruling that has been upheld by our state's courts.

OTHER BILLS – SB 114 requires that any hypnotist appointed to the state board that regulates the occupation must have either a master's or bachelor's degree. SB 209 changes the term "poor relief" to "township assistance" in the Indiana Code. SB 301 calls for the creation of cheerleading safety guidelines. SB 400 penalizes those who would hurt a sports official. SB 433 creates a poet laureate for Indiana.

Please stay in touch with me throughout the session by calling me through the toll-free Statehouse telephone number of 1-800-382-9842, e-mailing me through my Internet Web site at www.IN.gov/H73 or writing to me in care of the Indiana House of Representatives, 200 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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